CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/1110
29 August 1991

ENGLISH
Original: CHINESE/ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 20 AUGUST 1991 FROM THE HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TRANSMITTING THE TEXTS OF TWO STATEMENTS BY MR. LIU HUAQIU, VICE-FOREIGN MINISTER OF CHINA AND CHAIRMAN OF THE CHINESE DELEGATION, AT THE MEETING OF THE FIVE PERMANENT MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON ARMS CONTROL IN THE MIDDLE EAST HELD IN PARIS ON 8 AND 9 JULY 1991

Under the instruction of the Chinese Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the texts of two statements by Mr. Liu Huaqiu, Vice-Foreign Minister of China and chairman of the Chinese delegation, at the meeting of the five permanent members of the Security Council on arms control in the Middle East held in Paris on 8 and 9 July 1991.

I would be grateful if this letter and the texts of the two statements could be circulated as an official document of the Conference, and arrange for their translation into the other languages of the Conference.

(Signed) HOU Zhitong
Ambassador
Head of the delegation of the
People's Republic of China to
the Conference on Disarmament

Statement by Chairman of the Chinese Delegation
Vice-Foreign Minister Liu Huaqiu at the Perm-Five
Meeting on Arms Control in the Middle East
(Paris, 8 July 1991)

Arms control and disarmament in the Middle East is an important part of the Middle East peace process. Its attainment should mainly depend on the joint efforts of the countries in the region, but the United Nations Security Council and its five permanent members should also play an important role. In the opinion of the Chinese Delegation, what our present meeting needs to do is to concentrate on discussing those fundamental issues and guiding principles for arms control and disarmament in the Middle East as the basis for our exploration of the specifics. In this connection, I would like to outline the views and propositions of the Chinese Delegation.

First, the Middle East has long been a region of tension and turbulence, where fighting is commonplace and the people suffer from displacement and other scourges of war. The huge influx of weapons has turned it into one of the regions with the highest concentration of armaments. A major part of these weapons have come from the developed countries. As statistics shows, over 70 per cent of arms imports by the Middle East countries between 1985 and 1988 came from the major developed countries, of which the lion's share was taken up by just one or two big Powers. Their annual weapons sales to that region exceed $US 10 billion. Though China has sold some weapons to the Middle East region, their quantity and quality are very limited. This is a fact obvious to all. China has all along adopted a responsible and prudent attitude towards and observed the following principles in international arms trade:

(a) It should help maintain the legitimate self-defence capabilities of the countries concerned;

(b) It should not undermine regional peace, security and stability; and

(c) It should not be used to interfere in other countries' internal affairs.

If all the other countries concerned stop their arms sales to the Middle East, there will be no difficulty for China to do likewise.

Second, in the interest of peace and tranquility in the Middle East, China deems it necessary to exercise arms control in the region so as to achieve stability at a lower armament level. This undoubtedly will require the concerted efforts by countries within and without the region to check the massive flows of weapons into the region. To this end, the first and foremost thing to do is for those countries that export large quantities of sophisticated weapons to that region to take a responsible approach and exercise self-restraint in real earnest, rather than calling for arms control in the Middle East on the one hand while taking the lead in dumping advanced weapons there on the other. This should apply to other regions as well. Otherwise, it would be hard to avoid the impression of inconsistency and even contradiction of one's words and deeds.

Third, the principle of fair, reasonable, comprehensive and balanced arms control should be adhered to in the Middle East. By being comprehensive we mean that all types of weapons and all countries should be subject to control. What must not be done is to control certain types of weapons and not others with equal or even greater striking power. All countries in the Middle East should be treated equally without double standards. By being balanced, we mean that the existing equilibrium in the region should be maintained or that the original imbalances should not be further aggravated. In fact, the present state of armaments in the Middle East is unbalanced, with some countries possessing biological, chemical, hi-tech conventional weapons and even nuclear weapons or in the process of developing them while some others having a relatively weak military capability. Therefore, in striving for arms control and disarmament in the Middle East, efforts should be made to prevent aggravation of the imbalances and instabilities in the region on the one hand and to redress the existing imbalances on the other.

Fourth, China always stands for complete prohibition and thorough destruction (CPTD) of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons as well as for prevention of the proliferation of such weapons of mass destruction. China has long made clear its policy of not supporting and encouraging nuclear proliferation. China is also in favour of the earliest possible conclusion of a convention banning chemical weapons.

In line with the above-mentioned positions, China supports the establishment in the Middle East of a nuclear-free-zone and a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction. Countries in the region should destroy such weapons in their possession together with the facilities for the research and development and production of such weapons. The nuclear installation in the region should be placed under IAEA safeguards. Countries outside the Middle East should undertake not to introduce into the region such weapons as well as the technologies and parts exclusively used for the R & D and manufacturing of such weapons. At the same time, those outside the region in possession of the weapons of mass destruction should assume corresponding obligations not to use such weapons against the Middle East or deploy them in the region.

Fifth, China is of the opinion that the military forces of each country should be used only for its self-defence, and no country should try to attain an armament level beyond reasonable defence needs. Bearing in mind this principle, we do not endorse the proliferation of sophisticated conventional weapons which will undermine the region's stability and security. All countries, and particularly those developed countries exporting large numbers of sophisticated weapons systems and their advanced parts, should pursue a responsible and prudent policy towards arms trade in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Sixth, every sovereign State has the right to resist aggression in self-defence and apply scientific and technological progress in promoting economic development and environmental protection. The legitimate right to self-defence of the Middle East countries, especially those whose territories

are still under illegal occupation and whose security is being threatened, should not be compromised. The right of each country to peaceful uses of nuclear energy and space technology as well as to scientific and technological development should not be deprived of or impeded.

Seventh, China in principle is not against discussing the question of transparency of arms trade, which we believe has some positive significance for arms control and disarmament. However, transparency is just a supplementary method for arms control and disarmament, and should be based on the well-defined main principles and measures of arms control and disarmament. Without such a prerequisite, transparency will only have limited significance. Besides, this issue involves not only the exporting countries but also the sovereignty and security interests of the importing countries. Therefore, in discussing this question it is necessary to take into consideration and avoid infringing on the rights and interests of both parties. At present, United Nations experts are studying this issue. Its settlement will require consultations of a broader scale so that all the countries concerned will be able to contribute their share to a formula acceptable to the majority.

Eighth, the Middle East question with the Palestine issue at its heart has lasted for over 40 years, and has led to many wars and an overflowing of armaments in the region. Clearly, arms control here is inseparable from a just and comprehensive political settlement of the Middle East question. Only when the threat of crisis and war is removed will it be possible for the region's countries to beat the swords into ploughshares. Therefore, while trying to find a solution to the arms control issue in the Middle East, it is necessary to endeavour to bring about the return of the occupied Arab territories and restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people in compliance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. Meanwhile, the sovereignty and security of the State of Israel should also be respected and guaranteed. The parties concerned should be urged to give assurance not to use force, but to take steps aimed at easing up the situation and intensifying dialogue, thus gradually building confidence among them. At an appropriate time, an international conference on the Middle East under the United Nations auspices and with the participation of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and all the parties concerned should be convened. Efforts should also be made to promote the establishment of a new political and economic order in the Middle East on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence with a view to bringing about harmony and common development of the Middle East countries and between the Arab and Jewish nations.

Ninth, regional security is closely linked to global security. Turbulence and arms race in the Middle East will adversely affect world stability. Conversely, continued practice of power politics and heated arms race in a global context will inevitably affect security and stability in the Middle East. The conclusion: arms control in the Middle East cannot be separated from that in other regions and indeed from global arms control. It should help enhance the region's security and also the security of other regions and the whole world. By the same token, disarmament and stability in a global context as well as in other regions will also serve to realize disarmament and stability in the Middle East.

Tenth, the final settlement of the issue of arms control in the Middle East requires the participation of all the Middle East countries. To this end, their views and proposals should be heard extensively and respected fully. Monopolizing the whole affair by a few countries of imposing their will on others must be prevented. The United Nations, the Security Council, the Conference on Disarmament and other multilateral arms control and disarmament mechanisms should play a full role in the arms control and peace process in the Middle East. When necessary, a Middle East disarmament conference in the United Nations or regional framework should be convened with the participation of all the Middle East countries.